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TESLA'S $1.5BN PUSH SENDS BITCOIN VALUE BEYOND ₹32L

Bitcoin rises 16% to $44,795 after Tesla Inc pumps in money, signals its intent to accept cryptocurrency as a form of payment

LENDS LEGITIMACY TO CRYPTOCURRENCY

The California-based manufacturer said on Monday that it made the bet after updating its investment policy to allow it to invest in digital assets as well as bullion and gold exchange-traded funds. The massive investment lends increased legitimacy to electronic currencies, fast becoming a mainstream asset, despite skepticism in various quarters

FEARS OF MARKET MANIPULATION

- In India, the bullish run is unlikely to trigger a 'buy' spree because a Crypto Bill is in the pipeline, as is a govt's digital currency plan
- Tesla's massive fund infusion raises concerns of market manipulation. Prior to pumping in the money, its CEO maverick Elon Musk had been teasing the market with tweets on Bitcoin

35%
SURGE IN BITCOIN SINCE THE START OF 2021

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

CHAMOLI CALAMITY

How 12 got the kiss of life from mobile network

VINEET UPADHYAY @ Rishi

TRAPPED in a tunnel filled with water for nearly six hours, he thought it was going to be the end of his life. K Sriniwas Reddy, a geologist from Hyderabad, couldn't think of anything else after hearing a deafening noise followed by a sudden gush of water. But when all seemed over, the mobile network on a colleague's phone saved their lives. Reddy is one of the lucky 12 rescued on Sunday.

"I thought we are not going to survive this," said Reddy, who found himself locked in a tunnel which is part of the Tapovan hydel power project. "We tried frantically to reach the mouth of the tunnel and then realised that it was blocked. But there was light coming through a small opening and a colleague of ours had signal on his phone. I feel blessed as I am safe now."

It was local worker Rajesh Bhatt, whose call made the difference between life and death. "We were panicking and suddenly, I felt my phone vibrate. I called up my boss to say we were inside the tunnel. He informed authorities and the men in uniform saved our lives. We thank them. They are our gods," said Bhatt, a resident of Dhak village in Chamoli.

"We were cautious about using heavy machinery which could have hurt them," said Sanjay Kumar, ITBP officer.

Rescue operations under way at the Tapovan tunnel of a power project, a day after flash floods wreaked havoc in Uttarakhand, on Monday | SHEKHAR YADAV

20 BODIES FOUND, 202 STILL MISSING

VINEET UPADHYAY @ Rishi

A massive operation was launched on Monday to save 37 labourers trapped in a tunnel following a flash flood that devastated the Tapovan area in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district a day earlier. So far, 20 bodies have been found and 202 are still missing. Armed forces and disaster response units are involved in rescue work. A team of scientists from Delhi reached the spot to find out the cause of the disaster.

Joint teams of Indo-Tibetan Border Police, Indian Army, National Disaster Response Force, State Disaster Response Force and others had a tough time making their way through a sea of mud and debris. They also recovered dismembered body parts. The missing include 188 labourers (mostly from eastern UP, Bihar and Jharkhand), 11 locals and two police personnel.

"We are doing everything to save them. We rescued 15 men trapped in the other end of this tunnel yesterday," said Aparna Kumar, DIG of ITBP. The force of water was enormous and bodies were swept around 160 km downhill, to places like Srinagar (Uttarakhand), Rudraprayag, Kaleshwar and Karnprayag.

The rescuers have progressed about 100 metres into the 180-metre tunnel of the 520 MW power project on Dhauliganga that was swept away by the flood. The other unit damaged is the 13.2 MW project on Rishiganga. Both sites are still under heavy slush. Many workers and officials associated with them were on leave on Sunday, which minimised the loss of lives.

The state government has released ₹20 crore for Chamoli district. Total monetary losses are estimated to be in the region of ₹1,500 crore. The impact was such that the water level of Dhauliganga rose 80-100 ft above normal, engulfing the entire project and other structures, including the tunnel. "The debris is 20-30 feet high inside the tunnel which makes it difficult," said Sanjay Kumar, deputy commandant of ITBP. P9

We were towards the higher end of the tunnel. After a thundering noise, there was a sudden gush of water. Before we could understand, we were knee-deep in water. We ran towards the end of the tunnel

Suraj, a survivor

POWER POINT IN UTTARAKHAND

Developer	Hydro projects	Installed capacity
Under operation in Uttarakhand	37	3,971 MW
Being developed by private players	33	1,360 MW
Being developed by Uttarakhand govt	32	2,723 MW
Being developed by Central PSUs	22	5,801 MW
TOTAL	124	13,855 MW

Large hydel projects (above 25 MW): 53 | Small hydel projects (1-25 MW): 71

These projects are in 6 basins: Alaknanda, Bhagirathi, Ganga Sub basin, Ramganga, Sharda and Yamuna. Most of them are on Alaknanda and Bhagirathi

Give reforms a chance, says PM, urges farmers to resume talks

Lauds Sikhs; assures MSP will continue; cites Manmohan's push for reforms

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Monday urged the farmers to give agri reforms a chance even as he reiterated that the minimum support price (MSP) mechanism would continue. Urging the farmers to call off their protest, the prime minister said the government was open to changes in the law. "Let us sit together and talk," he said.

In his reply to the Motion of Thanks to the President's address in Rajya Sabha, the PM said MSP was, is being, and would continue to be provided. He wanted the farmers to be open minded about the reforms that aim to modernise the mandi system all the while ensuring continued availability of affordable ration to the poor. "The laws are aimed at empowering the small and marginal farmers, who make up for more than two-thirds of the farming community but cannot avail of government scheme benefits," he added.

Claiming that some protestors and foreign players were misleading the agitators, he lashed out at the opposition for its U-turn from advocating reforms during its rule to bashing it now. Reading excerpts from a statement issued by former prime minister Manmohan Singh on the need for farm reforms and one national market, Modi said, "I am implementing what he (Manmohan Singh) wanted, you should appreciate this. At least, you (opposition) listen to him," he said.

Later, Modi said a new crop of *andolan jivi* (professional protesters) has emerged in the country. "These are like *parjeevi* (parasites) and are always on the lookout for protests. When they are not in the forefront, they operate from backstage," he said.

Perhaps alluding to tweets by pop star Rihanna and Swedish activist Greta Thunberg supporting the agitation, Modi said, "I see that a new FDI has come. We have to protect the nation from this FDI. We need Foreign Direct Investment but the new FDI is Foreign Destructive Ideology," he said.

Kharge gets threat call after talking to Press

Congress veteran M Mallikarjun Kharge on Monday received a threat call, minutes after he spoke to reporters in Delhi, criticising PM Modi's speech in Rajya Sabha. P4

Deve Gowda devoted his life to farmers: PM

Even as he lambasted the Opposition on its stand on farmers' issue, PM Modi praised former PM and JDS supremo H D Deve Gowda, hailing him for devoting his life to farmers' welfare. P4

Kisans reciprocate gesture, ready for fresh dialogue

HARPREET BAJWA @ Chandigarh

RESPONDING to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call to end their agitation and return to the dialogue table, farmers' leaders said they have never shied away from talks and would resume discussions once the Centre sends a fresh proposal and fixes the date and time. President of Krantikari Kisan Union Punjab Dr Darshan Pal said they have had 11 rounds of talks with three Union ministers, and were ready to continue engaging with the Centre. Dr Pal is a senior member of the umbrella organisation of multiple farmers' unions.

Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) leader Rakesh Tikait sought to reiterate the farmers' position, saying they wanted a legal guarantee on MSP, cushioning the farmers from the vagaries of demand-supply defined rates for their produce. P10

Vijayanagar, 31st district takes birth

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru/Ballari/Hosapete

THE State Government on Monday issued a gazette notification carving out the new Vijayanagar district from Ballari district. The new district with Hosapete as its district headquarters will have six taluks -- Hosapete, Kudligi, Hagaribommanahalli, Kotturu, Hoovina Hadagali and Harapanahalli. But the world heritage site Hampi will not be part of the new district.

Ballari district with Ballari as its headquarters will have five taluks -- Ballari, Kurugodu, Siruguppa, Kampli and Sanduru.

The state cabinet had given an in-principle approval for the creation of the new district on November 18, 2020 and a draft notification was published on December 14, inviting objections and suggestions. "The suggestions received on this behalf have been considered by the government," the notification issued on Monday stated.

Minister Anand Singh celebrates the formation of Vijayanagar district in Hosapete on Monday | EXPRESS

CONTINUED ON: P4

Tikait to hold meet in N K'taka this month

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Mysuru

AFTER a protest-filled start for the year, Karnataka farmers are all set for more action this month as farmer leader **Rakesh Tikait**, the new-found torchbearer of farmer protests across the country, will hold a mahapanchayat-like gathering in North Karnataka in the second half of February.

Tikait will be in the state to galvanise support for farmer protests, said president of Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha and Hasiru Sene, Badagalpura Nagendra, on Monday. State farmers will also go on a Vidhana Soudha Chalo rally during the budget session, asking the government to repeal the farm laws and cow slaughter bill, which was passed in the Council on Monday.

Over 50,000 farmers from each district will take part in the rally, demanding MSP for coffee, silk and other cash crops similar to what is in vogue in states like Kerala. MSP for these crops will not only help farmers, but also the government, he added. Besides protests, a South Indian farmers' round table conference os planned in Bengaluru.

NEET TO BE HELD TWICE A YEAR

The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has given its nod for the test to be organised on the lines of the Joint Entrance Examination (Main). The schedule for the entrance exam for medical, dental and several other related institutions, however, is yet to be finalised

PANDEMIC TO ENDEMIC, COVID IS PETERING OUT, SAY EXPERTS

CHETANA BELAGERE @ Bengaluru

THE Covid pandemic is now nearing an endemic phase, say epidemiologists and virologists. "India is likely to see the transition from the epidemic to endemic phase in a month or two," explained renowned virologist Dr Jacob John, a retired professor and head of departments of clinical virology and microbiology, Christian Medical College (Vellore).

"An endemic disease means it never really goes away and often returns in a specific season or region periodically. Theoretically, an infection becomes endemic if on an average each infected individual transmits it to one other person -- when the Reproduction number or R is 1. During an epidemic, R is more than one and when the spread is decreasing through control measures or herd immunity, R is less than 1," he said.

But Dr N Manjunath, Director, Jayadeva Institute of Cardiology, said, "There are a number of patterns that can be observed in endemic diseases. Some can exist at low levels throughout the year, while others might show periods of higher transmission interspersed with periods of low transmissions." P3

Government of Karnataka
DEPARTMENT OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND PANCHAYAT RAJ

Sri B.S. Yediyurappa
Hon'ble Chief Minister
Government of Karnataka

"To liberate Karnataka from Bonded Labour"
Eradication of Bonded Labour system is our Motto

- The practice of Bitti Chakari, in some places in northern parts of the State has been abolished across the State through notification. Those who force any person to provide Bitti Chakari will be liable for punishment as per the sections mentioned in Bonded Labour Act, 1976.
- SOP Manual on Bonded Labour containing procedures on identification, release, rehabilitation of Bonded Labourers and method to conduct Summary trial has been designed.
- The Vigilance committees to oversee the Bonded Labour issues at district and sub-divisional levels reconstituted in the districts.
- For holistic rehabilitation of Bonded Labourers, comprehensive circular and directions have been issued. To provide economical and social empowerment to released Bonded Labourers the authorities are directed to provide -
  - House-Site,
  - NREGA Job Card
  - Ration Card
  - Arogya Bhagya Arogya Karnataka Card
  - School enrolment for children
  - Skill and Job oriented training for persons
  - To sanction loans for Women self help groups
  - Pension under social security schemes
- For effective implementation of Bonded Labourers rehabilitation scheme nodal officers are appointed in the Districts

Hon'ble Minister of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, Shri K.S. Eshwarappa interacting with Rescued Bonded Labourers.

To cherish and follow the noble ideals which inspired our national struggle for freedom - is the fundamental duty of every citizen of the country

STAY PROTECTED FROM COVID-19. NO CARELESSNESS UNTIL THERE IS A CURE
Wear Mask | Follow Physical Distancing | Maintain Hand Hygiene